

(Washington, D.C.) - Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) released the following statement following President Bush's final State of the Union address tonight:

"America faces a struggling economy, a seemingly endless war in Iraq, and troubling conditions for the growing veterans' population, yet tonight, President Bush came up with few new ideas on how to solve our nation's most important challenges.

"Over the last year, the New Congress has enacted major bipartisan legislation to bring real economic support to hard working Americans across the nation. Congress granted significant tax relief to the engine that drives our economy - our small businesses with the enactment of the Small Business Tax Cuts. Congress helped spur innovation and higher education through enactment of the College Cost Reduction Act. And Congress reduced the tax burden of 19 million working families across the United States by modernizing the Alternative Minimum Tax.

"Over the past year, we have been working every day to improve the lives of our working families. With our economic forecast more uncertain every day, we need the President over the next year to be a willing partner for progress and not a partisan obstructionist.

"As a Member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, I am committed to working every day to alleviate the concerns and challenges facing our nation's veterans. On the battlefield, the military pledges to leave no soldier behind, and over the past year, this New Congress has made a historic investment in our veterans, ensuring that our nation is finally on track to leaving no veteran behind.

"While the President did discuss the continuing war in Iraq and Afghanistan, he did not address directly the growing health care needs for our soldiers who are returning home with skyrocketing numbers of undiagnosed Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and other complex injuries that need our attention now. Our nation has a responsibility to our wounded warriors to ensure that the recommendations made by the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors to improve health care are met in a timely fashion. The least we can do is keep our promise as a nation to provide quality health care and access to services our veterans have earned with their service.

"While the President did not promise to prioritize veterans' health care this year, I hope the President use this past year's bipartisan accomplishments for veterans as a springboard for true progress.

"The people of Texas and this nation want a new direction for this country, but we need a new direction from our President as well. Unlike this past year, I hope we will find a partner willing to negotiate in the last year of his presidency."

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